

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Southam St James Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary

Tollgate Road, Southam CV47 0EE	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Coventry</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Warwickshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	12 June 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 125727
Headteacher (Executive)/ Head of School	Phyllis King / Kathy Palmizi
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

#### School context

Southam St James is a smaller than average primary school with 180 pupils on roll. There is privately managed nursery provision on site. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals is below national average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have been judged to require special needs support is below national average. Since the last inspection there have been changes in key staff, including the headteacher. The school has also formed a formal collaboration with Long Itchington Primary School and have appointed an executive headteacher to manage both schools.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Southam St James as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian distinctiveness of the school is embedded and positively informs the way of life of all members of the school family, particularly the pupils.
- The strong Christian partnership between the executive headteacher and the head of school effectively drives the vision and values of the school, such as love, forgiveness and reconciliation, emphasising them as a central focus for everyday life, building a sense of team.
- The rapid progress of all groups, particularly the vulnerable, nurtured by Christian love and care.
- The vision and values of the school are clear and understood, permeating all aspects of school life and creating a sense of loving peace which is tangible.
- Collective worship is fundamental to all members of the school, enabling them to learn about Jesus as a guide and supporting their spiritual development.

#### Areas to improve

- Introduce class worship led by the pupils to provide a smaller setting to enable them to further develop their skills as worship leaders promoting Christian practices.
- Support the newly appointed religious education (RE) coordinator in their role to enable them to lead the subject effectively and to provide a challenge for pupils in their understanding and belief across a range of religions.

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**

Southam St James is a school where the vision and values are at the heart of daily life. They are understood and lived-out by all members of the school family. As a result, the relationships that exist are rooted in Christian love. As many pupils questioned shared, 'if we ever fall out we know we should make friends and start again.' This exemplifies the impact of their core values of love, reconciliation and forgiveness in shaping their choices. Each class has an agreed code of how they should live together. This is guided by their vision which states, 'We are all unique and valued members of the St James' family sharing learning, love and laughter as we follow the teachings of Jesus.' Consequently, the behaviour of the pupils is excellent. School leaders focus on the whole child from the time they enter the school with skills broadly in line with national expectations. Leaders know their pupils well and target government funding, supplemented by the school budget, to meet individual needs. Inclusive positive approaches and effective tracking enable support to be used for individuals through planned interventions by trained adults. These actions ensure all pupils flourish and grow in confidence to learn successfully. Over the past year leaders have been focused on the standards of all groups of pupils. Their rapid improvement plan has raised achievement to be in line or above national expectations. All groups, particularly the vulnerable, progress rapidly nurtured by Christian love and care. Pupils want to come to school. As a result, attendance is good. They acknowledge how: 'the school is a safe place where we can share our worries'. They also appreciate the kindness of friends and teachers, 'who follow the teachings of Jesus'. Pupils have access to a rich and varied curriculum enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities that drive the vision. One of these has been the 'Massive Messy Church' linking 18 churches fostering fun and Christian teaching. Parents are very positive about the learning experiences offered. They say that teachers and school leaders go the extra mile for their children and 'this makes the school special'. They are very happy that there are strong links with St James' Church and All Saints Church Ladbroke. They witness the difference being part of a distinctive church school is making to their children's lives supporting their spiritual journey. RE is a popular subject that is challenging pupils to think about Christianity and other faiths and religions in a global context. It makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character. The school is also part of the 'Global Learning Project' through Southam College. Leaders are in the process of networking with a school in the centre of Coventry with a larger proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. From these experiences, the school is enabling pupils to develop an understanding of Christianity as a multi-world faith. The school council and worship team feel the roles they have are important. They are aware of those less fortunate than themselves. They regularly suggest raising funds for charities locally, nationally and internationally. They work diligently to raise funds through non-uniform days and cake sales for 'toilet twinning' and cancer charities. One child even cut her hair for the Little Princess Trust. Visits and visitors are a popular feature of the school. Photographic records and pupils' poems evidence the spiritual and emotional responses to the recent residential visit to York Minster. Pupils are keen to share their memories through their writing. There are many discussions, questionnaires and evaluations used by leaders to gather pupil and parental views. The documented findings evidence the high esteem in which the school is held by those it serves. Also, the significant contribution it makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is valued by their parents.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship is an outstanding feature of the school. Daily the school family comes together respectfully to commune with God. In the words of the worship team of pupils, 'the Holy Spirit is in here (pointing to their hearts) with us. He helps us to understand all the things Jesus has said and done.' As a team, these pupils help to set up, welcome the congregation, lead the responses and light the Trinity candles. They choose the music and worship songs, lead prayer and support the other worship leaders. As they explain, 'we have a lot of responsibility. We have grown a lot spiritually but we want to do more.' They want the experience of planning and leading an act of worship from start to finish. Currently, all worship is whole school and so pupils do not have the experience of leading worship in smaller settings. However, worship experiences are varied and inspirational, whether in school or in St James Church. Parents say how much they enjoy attending the special services celebrating the Christian calendar at the church. Worship has a strong focus on Anglican tradition. The worship team welcome the Trinity through the lighting of the candles setting the reflective tone. As they sang the Lord's prayer the pupils join as a family to worship God. The focus on Christian values permeates the worship throughout. The headteacher skilfully links biblical truths with real life settings to explore how Jesus teaches us to always be truthful. Pupils, through worship are inspired and challenged to reflect deeply. They are prayerful and reflective. They are motivated to pray through the prayer pool in the foyer and the reflection areas in each classroom. It is inspiring to see groups of young individuals selecting a pebble and standing with their heads bowed before placing it in the 'pool'. As one member of the school council shared, 'I like times of reflection when I feel close to God.' Pupils are prayerful and are called to pray and reflect at different times of the day. Classroom reflection areas, the wonderful array of crosses and RE displays evidence this. One of the favourite acts of worship is led fortnightly by the 'Open the Book' team. Parents,

pupils and staff commend the work of this group of church members. They bring the Bible to life and engage and challenge the pupils to become part of the stories told. The liturgical wheel guides the use of colour as the school celebrates the special services of the Christian calendar. Through worship pupils are learning about Anglican traditions and God the Father, Son and Spirit. Worship is regularly monitored and evaluated by governors, pupils and leaders. Consequently, it is very effective in shaping and guiding the spiritual lives of the school family.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE is held in high esteem by the school. It is popular because it engages and challenges pupils to learn about Christianity and other global faiths. Pupils often take what they have learned and apply this learning in their lives. One child in Year 4 studying Sikhism has made a game, 'Who stole the Guru Granth Sahib?' This evidenced how he has engaged and responded to the challenges of the learning. This class are to visit the gurdwara later in the term. Lessons observed demonstrate the high quality of learning and teaching. For example, the Year 2 class grappled with the value of compassion responding to the tearful camel story. They created animals and told other stories illustrating Islamic belief. They engage fully with the challenges and learn about and from the experiences. The Year 5 class, taught by the new RE leader, are inspired to explore the concepts of revealing and revelation. The teacher shows outstanding skill in stepping the learning, enabling the pupils to engage with and understand the challenges set. Resources effectively contributed to the learning experience and all pupils progressed well. Standards in RE are at least in line with expectations and often exceed these. Monitoring of the subject is rigorous, ensuring standards are maintained. Governors, through the SIAMS group and school leaders are involved. The new coordinator's roles and responsibilities are agreed. Training is planned and time has been allotted for her to fully engage with her new role and its challenges. Senior leaders are aware of their roles in supporting her to be an effective leader. Expectations are set high now and for the future development of the subject. RE books provide an effective source for leaders to reflect on the pupils' learning. Marking is consistent and supports learning guiding pupils in their next steps to success. Documentation from book trawls, learning walks, surveys and pupil discussions evidence that teaching and assessment are effective in driving standards. As a result, pupils are developing their understanding of Christianity and a range of other religions and cultures. There are strong links with worship and social, moral and spiritual studies. RE effectively contributes to the vision and values of the school.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

There is a strong and effective Christian partnership at work in the school. The executive headteacher and the head of school share the vision of being 'rooted in love' and make it explicit. They daily witness to their belief in the Christian values underpinning relationships and school life. They live-out the vision creating a sense of loving peace that is tangible to visitors. Jesus is the guide shaping lives and interactions. As the minister reflected, 'Christianity isn't theory in this school it is natural not forced.' This creates a sense of family and shared purpose that is powerful. Parents, pupils, staff and governors all witness the difference the Christian values are making in their lives. The strong team approach unites all and gives individuals a voice and a desire to contribute. An example to illustrate this is the newly adopted motto and logo created by the pupils. The motto, 'Let your light shine' clearly articulates the vision. The logo incorporates the 'golden cockerel' highlighting the strong links with the church. Governors are fully involved with the school. The SIAMS team meets regularly to review policies and practices ensuring they are driving the Christian character of the school. Documented evidence records their rigorous monitoring practices through their link roles and responsibilities. Some are involved with the 'Open the Book' worship. They also engage with the pupils when they visit St James Church for special services. Governors and school leaders are very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is evidenced by the 'rapid improvement plan' created to focus on improving standards. The whole community has confidence in the strong leadership and the improvements made. Professional development is a feature of the school offered to build skills and expertise to drive the vision effectively. The head of school speaks highly of the 'leading a church school' course she attended with the Diocese. This has informed discussions and actions to further strengthen the Christian character of the school. The partnership in leadership and the collaboration with Long Itchington Primary School is endorsed by the Diocese. The new structures are designed to strengthen leadership and build capacity for the future of this church school. Leadership at all levels commits to the vision and values of the school. The new RE leader is no exception. In addition, the provision for RE and worship meets statutory requirements. The strong links with the local churches, the local authority and the Diocese are appreciated by school leaders. The pastoral support from the minister is appreciated by parents, for example, following bereavement. The contribution of the minister and the 'Open the Book Team' to RE and worship enriches the pupils' experiences. In many ways this school is investing wholeheartedly in the lives of its family and community locally, nationally and internationally.